Helicopter Early Launch Process Guidelines: Trauma
SAC Air Ambulance Subcommittee

Definition: Helicopter Early Launch Process (HELP) is the request for an air ambulance response prior to EMS arrival on scene.

I. Trauma Patient: The Helicopter Early Launch Process for the trauma patient should be considered when transport by ground EMS to the closest appropriate trauma center will require greater than 30 minutes from the time of dispatch **and one or more of the following criteria** are met:

A. Anatomical Criteria
- All penetrating injuries to head, neck, torso, boxer short and T-shirt coverage areas, and extremities proximal to elbow and knee
- Airway compromise or obstruction, flail chest, hemo- or pneumothorax, patients intubated on scene
- Two or more proximal long-bone fractures, open or closed
- *Crush, degloved, pulseless, or mangled extremity (leave all here?)*
- Amputation proximal to wrist and ankle
- Pelvic fractures *(need to further specify?)*
- Open or depressed skull fractures
- Paralysis or signs of spinal cord or cranial nerve injury
- Active or uncontrolled hemorrhage
- *BURNS: ADULTS: Major burns >20% BSA or any signs of inhalation injury*
- *PEDS: BURNS > 10% BSA or any signs of inhalation injury*
- *PEDS* other:
  - Maxillo-facial or upper airway injury

B. Biomechanics of Injury/Evidence of high energy impact? (include or not to include)
- Falls
  - Adults: > 20 ft (one story = 10 ft.)
  - Children: > 10 ft. *[or 2-3 times height of the child- confirm why delete?]*
- High-risk auto crash
  - Intrusion: > 12 in occupant site; *[> 18 inches in any site- confirm why delete?]*
  - Ejection (partial or complete) from automobile or rollover
  - Death in same passenger compartment
  - Vehicle telemetry data consistent with high risk of injury or highway speed
- High-risk Pedestrian, Cycle, ATV Crash
  - Auto v. Pedestrian/bicyclist thrown, run over, or with significant (> 20 mph) impact
  - Motorcycle or ATV crash > 20 mph with separation of rider
- *All open (non-long bone) fractures*
- *Amputation distal to wrist or ankle of two or more digits*
- *Penetrating injuries from elbow to wrist and knee to ankle*
- *Assault with other than brief Loss of Consciousness (? Define time span)*

- Pregnancy with acute abdominal pain and traumatic event
- Burns with associated trauma
- PEDS other:
  - Seat Belt Sign
  - Unrestrained child 8 years of age or younger
  - 2 or more extremity fractures

II. **Burn Patient**
1. Greater than 20% body surface area burned
2. Inhalation Injury (closed space – facial burns)

III. **Medical Patient**
1. Severe Chest Pain
2. Uncontrolled Bleeding
3. Poisoning/overdose, especially with decreased level of consciousness
4. Respiratory distress
5. Anaphylaxis/severe allergic reaction
6. Significant mental status change
7. Continuous seizure

IV. **Suspected Stroke:** The Helicopter Early Launch Process for the stroke patient should be considered when transport by ground EMS to the closest appropriate stroke center will require greater than 30 minutes from the time of dispatch **and one or more of the following criteria** are met:

1. Which patients?: Class I and Class II
2. When? as defined?

V. STEMI patient: The Helicopter Early Launch Process for the STEMI patient should be considered when transport by ground EMS to the closest appropriate STEMI center will require greater than 30 minutes from the time of dispatch **and one or more of the following criteria** are met:

1. Which patients? Class I and II
2. When? as defined?

II.   An air ambulance should be considered when it will assist the Time Critical Diagnosis patient in arriving at the appropriate facility during the time window specific to the disease.

III.   Local HELP policies and procedures should be established with the approval of the ground emergency medical response agencies and consistent with existing Revised Statutes, Chapter 190, Emergency Services Section 190.134.

Note: These guidelines were developed by the Air Ambulance Subcommittee to be used by agencies that incorporate early launch into their protocols.